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SUBJECT: Peace process update: Tigers set to meet in Dublin; Monitors and Tigers hold high-level meeting

Refs: Colombo 1684, and previous

(U) Classified by James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission. Reasons 1.5 (b,d).

1. (C) SUMMARY: In the latest peace process news, Tiger officials are set to meet in Dublin to discuss the group's response to the GSL's north/east administration proposal. The Tigers also recently held a high-level meeting with the Norwegian-led ceasefire monitoring mission to discuss ways to improve cooperation. In other developments, the radical JVP party is leading efforts to torque up opposition to the peace process via a program of rallies and marches. At this point, the peace process is in a wait-and-see mode, with all eyes on the Tigers' response to the GSL proposal. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) MEETING IN DUBLIN: In the latest peace process news, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) officials are set to meet in Dublin to discuss the group's response to the Sri Lankan government's north/east administration proposal. The LTTE delegation reportedly will be led by LTTE Political Wing Chief S.P. Thamilselvan, and will include Eastern Province military commander Karuna and LTTE Peace Secretariat Chief S. Pulithevan. Tamil supporters of the group who live outside of Sri Lanka are also slated to join the meeting. The actual dates for the meeting have been pushed back somewhat from the original late September timeframe, but the discussions now seem set to start on October 5. Some LTTE officials have reportedly already left Sri Lanka bound for Ireland, while others, including Thamilselvan and Karuna, reportedly will leave on October 3. The Norwegian government facilitators appear to be the chief sponsors of the meeting, although the Norwegian embassy here will not confirm this. The Irish government's role, if any, is not known. Among other groups invited to address the meeting, the "Forum of Federations," a Canadian organization, will reportedly make a presentation on federalism and constitutional devolution options.

3. (C) The Dublin meeting follows closely on the heels of a similar meeting held in Paris last month at which the Tigers fine-tuned their counter-proposals to the government's proposal on the north/east. Based on what Mission has heard from the Norwegian facilitators (see Reftels), the central purpose of the Dublin meeting is for the LTTE to review further its draft counter-proposals before presenting them to the Sri Lankan government via Norway's good offices later this month. If things go smoothly, GSL-LTTE talks could start up again by the November timeframe.

4. (SBU) MONITORS MEET WITH LTTE: In other peace process developments, the Norwegian-run Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM) held a high-level meeting with the Tigers in the LTTE-controlled town of Kilinochchi in north-central Sri Lanka on September 28. The large meeting was attended by the head of the SLMM, Tryggve Tellefsen, his deputy, Hargrup Haukland, and SLMM district heads for the north/east. On the Tiger side, Political Chief Thamilselvan and the LTTE's district-level political chiefs for the north/east were present.

5. (C) When asked about the meeting, SLMM spokeswoman Agnes Bragadottir told poloff October 1 that it focused on ways that the LTTE and SLMM could cooperate in a more effective manner. Bragadottir said the SLMM viewed the results of the meeting as "quite positive and constructive" in that the LTTE promised to work more closely with the SLMM. The LTTE, for example, agreed to hold regular high-level and local-level meetings with the monitors. Regarding specific issues, however, Bragadottir indicated that the LTTE did not commit in any way to vacating its unauthorized "Wan Ela" military camp in Trincomalee District. Despite warnings from the SLMM that doing so is "provocative," the group also did not commit to stopping its practice of raising its flag at LTTE-sponsored ceremonies that take place in

government-controlled areas.

16. (U) As for the LTTE's reaction to the September 28 meeting, "TamilNet," the pro-Tiger website, reported that "there was a frank exchange over several crucial matters," but did not elaborate much further than that. TamilNet's coverage also included a montage of photos of the meeting.

17. (SBU) JVP TRIES TO STOKES OPPOSITION TO PROCESS: Turning to the situation in southern Sri Lanka, the radical Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) party has been intensifying its anti-peace process activities. The group, for example, is the main sponsor of a "Kandy to Colombo" protest march taking place September 27 - October 1. Thus far, the march has been peaceful, though it has tied up traffic on the important Kandy-Colombo road. The march is set to culminate late October 1 with a large rally in Colombo. The latest march and rally are a follow-up to the JVP's "Galle to Colombo" march, which took place in late August.

18. (SBU) As part of its anti-peace process agitation campaign, the JVP also recently took the lead role in forming a new group called the "Patriotic National Movement" (PNM). The PNM is a loose umbrella organization made up of the JVP, and various Sinhalese extremist Buddhist monks and others opposed to the direction of the peace process and the Norwegian facilitation effort. Some members of President Kumaratunga's Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) have also publicly affiliated themselves with the PNM.

19. (C) COMMENT: At this point, the peace process is in a wait-and-see mode, with all eyes on the Tigers' response to the GSL's north/east interim administration proposal. The government's proposal was provided to the LTTE in July and the Tigers have now had months to review it. A LTTE response that is flexible will almost certainly be crucial in getting the process back on track after the group's abrupt withdrawal from the negotiations in April. In the meantime, the fact that the LTTE-SLMM meeting went well is a net positive for the on-the-ground situation. Due largely to the LTTE's failure to vacate the Wan Ela camp, LTTE-SLMM relations had hit their nadir in recent weeks. The LTTE appears to want to avoid a complete breakdown in ties, however.

110. (C) COMMENT (Continued): Regarding the JVP's latest efforts, the group's hard-line opposition to the peace process does not seem to have found much resonance among the general public. In fact, based on all that we are hearing, the process still retains strong public support. That said, there is no doubt that the JVP hopes that its stance becomes a winning issue down the line. In the meantime, Sri Lanka can expect a string of marches and rallies against the process, with some more raucous than others. END COMMENT.

111. (U) Minimize considered.

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